

The Festive Summer in Lebanon

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The summer of Lebanon is a feast - a continuous party, from north to south, with plays and music. There are also local and international tourism and cultural festivals, known for the participation of local and foreign groups.



A Roman Coliseum in Byblos Jbeil.

آثار رومانية في بيبلوس جبيل.

During these festivities, most Lebanese become tourists: the people of the coast travel to the mountains to enjoy the fresh air and healthy environment. The mountain people will go down to the coast to enjoy water sports. Thousands of Lebanese expatriates spend their holidays with their folks in the mountain resorts and in the coastal cities. The resorts will be full of joyous people, laughing and shouting, trying to forget the year's troubles.

During the summer months of July - September the largest number of Arab and foreign tourists - 42% of annual visitors - make their way to Lebanon. This is the time when the tourist industry makes its money: resorts in the mountains as well as coastal venues devote a great deal of time and energy to their programmes, in which the government also takes part.

May is the time for festivals. In Beit El-Din, the resort in the Shouf region in a historical

palace known as the Palace of Prince Bashir, the residence of the president of the republic, there is a yearly international two-month festival from the 3rd July until the end of August. Mansour al-Rahbani's play, *The Rule of the Shepherds*, with the actors Anton Kurbaj and Rafeeq Ali Ahmad, will be performed. The Canadian Circus, Eloise, will present a comic show *Nomad* and the French pop star Garoun, known for his performance in *The Hunchback of Notterdam* will have his show. Last year this festival attracted 50,000.

Baalbeck is also a place for festivals traditionally held every year between July and August. Arabs and Westerners take part. Tyre makes its contribution under the auspices of a local organisation headed by Mrs. Randa Beri.

Festivals are also held in Aanjar, the Ummawi Beqaa town famous for its historical places. Jibel, the Phoenician coastal city,

hosts an annual festival. Jounieh's festival is called *Walk and Stay Awake*, Tripoli the northern capital will host a theatre festival, and a music festival will be held in Aliah. July is the month for festivals for expatriates.

Beirut has the lion share of cultural activities with a number of distinguished festivals among them *The Summer of Beirut 2004 Festival* planned for August. The programme includes the Middle East Film Festival, the Beirut Marathon and other festivities.

Lebanon's tourist facilities are improving and the prices are coming down. The tourist industry has also benefitted from improved transport and communications and the Ministry of Tourism is dedicated to the welfare of all visitors as their numbers increase. Last year almost a million people visited Lebanon attracted by the beauty of its mountain resorts and coastal regions which cater for the enjoyment of all - young and old. ■